

Reflections on the various receptions that the report on the existence of a redeemer has found

(Betrachtung über die verschiedene Aufnahme, die die Nachricht von dem Dasein eines Erlösers gefunden hat)

A sermon (outline) by Friedrich Schleiermacher, delivered on 26th December 1794
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Source: Johannes Bauer, hg.v., *Ungedruckte Predigten Schleiermachers aus den Jahren 1820-1828: Mit Einleitungen und mit einem Anhang ungedruckter Briefe von Schleiermacher und Henriette Herz* (Leipzig: N.Heinsius Nachfolger, 1909), 83–5.

Luke 2: 15ff,

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Introduction: It is useful to explore the different opinions and beliefs of men about important occurrences, including about the report of the birth of the Redeemer.

Theme: Reflection on the various receptions that the report of the existence of a Redeemer has found.

I. Theoretical faith

1. Description

a) Scenario

α) The impression made by the report

β) Investigation of the circumstances

γ) Expansion

δ) Praise of God

b) Contrast

α) Interest in Revelation

β) Investigation of the miracle

γ) Zeal for the expansion of the faith

δ) Pious sentiments

2. Shortfall

- a) Scenario - there is no subsequent trace that they [the reports] had been about the Christ Child.
- b) In other words.
 - α) This faith does not make us into true pupils of Jesus, for it is only a “Lord, Lord cry”;
 - β) It does not bring us the true fruits of religion in the departure of life, in sorrow and death.

II. Amazement

1. The deniers

- a) Description
 - α) Scenario.
 - 1. They rejected the miraculous and at the same time that to which it pointed.
 - 2. They had no sense of spiritual needs.
 - β) Contrast
 - 1. They do not want to know about any Redeemer, because they are concerned merely with earthly things.
 - 2. They ridicule the attentiveness which others devote to this occurrence
- b) Inference
 - α) Scenario – they remain shut out of the church of Christ.
 - β) Contrast – they will never be religious; but the time will come when they will regret it.

2. The doubters.

- a) Scenario
 - α) Description – they wanted to suspend judgement about the miraculous until they could make a judgement about the moral.
 - β) Inference – they have perhaps been real disciples of Jesus.
- b) Contrast
 - α) Description – they suspend their approval because the miraculous is forced upon them and the moral freedom of religion is set back.
 - β) Inference – they become more favourably disposed towards religion when they get to know it better and at the same time become more acquainted with the nature of the human soul and the nature of human existence on earth.

III. Pondering in the Heart

1. Scenario.

- a) The miraculous element excites attentiveness.
- b) Afterwards, the moral element first fetters the soul

2. Contrast

- a) The miraculous element causes the inquiry.
- b) The moral element attracts approval to itself.

Note: This classification is the least, but the best, to which we too must confess ourselves; we are also, like Mary, related to Christ.

Conclusion: This can serve as the test of which classification we have belonged to up to now, and as an admonition to those who are wrong.